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CIA Control Easing Opposed

A coalition of 36 organizations gathered as the Campaign for Political Rights yesterday voiced its "strong opposition" to weakening restraints on the CIA.

In a letter to President Carter, the group expressed concern over his State of the Union message this week and companion legislative plans to repeal the statute governing covert operations and to exempt most CIA activities from the Freedom of Information Act.

"Such actions would make a mockery of your stated commitment to intelligence reform," the group protested to Carter. "Indeed, the United States is still today suffering the ramifications of the past CIA covert operations."

The Campaign for Political Rights includes groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union, Americans for Democratic Action, the National Lawyers Guild and Women Strike for Peace.

ACLU legislative counsel Jerry Berman said his group is also strongly opposed to another pending bill that could make it a crime to disclose the names of CIA operatives working abroad—even when they were derived from already public information such as biographic registers. Publication "with the intent to impair or impede the foreign intelligence activities of the United States" could be punished by a one-year prison term. Berman said the ACLU regards the measure as vague and unconstitutional.